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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0540
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN INVITES SECRETARY RICE TO INTERNATIONAL
PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY CONFERENCE

11. (U) Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent the Embassy a diplomatic note September 3 stating that Turkmenistan will hold an international conference on "Preventive Diplomacy and International Cooperation" in Ashgabat on December 10-11. The conference is timed to coincide with Turkmenistan's Neutrality Day holiday, celebrated annually on December 12.

12. (U) The Ministry asked the Embassy to forward a letter from Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov to Secretary Rice inviting the Secretary to attend the conference. The Ministry also invited the

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United States to send up to two other prominent persons -- diplomats or government officials -- to participate in the conference. The Government of Turkmenistan will bear all expenses, including travel costs to/from Ashgabat, and board and lodging for those participating in the conference. The Embassy will forward copies of both the diplomatic note and the letter to Secretary Rice to the State Department's Turkmenistan desk for action.

14. (U) BEGIN QUOTE

It's my great pleasure to invite Your Excellency to attend an International Conference on "Preventive Diplomacy and International Cooperation," which will be held in the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat on December 10-11, 2007.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs, high-ranking delegations from International Organizations and Research Centers, as well as prominent scholars, experts, diplomats and public figures are cordially invited to participate in this conference, which is arranged right on the eve of Neutrality Day of Turkmenistan, annually celebrated on December 12.

As of our view, holding such International Conference will promote a constructive exchange of views on wide range of problems related to provision of regional and global development in the atmosphere of peace and security. Along with above-said, this forum would become another opportunity for discussion on the issues related to the development of sustainable international cooperation.

One of the important items in agenda of this Conference would be

discussion on conceptual approaches and elaboration of practical recommendations in the field of preventive diplomacy in Central Asia. In this context it seems to be appropriate to identify concrete directions and projects of the UN Regional Center on Preventive Diplomacy, which is planned to be inaugurated in Ashgabat during this Conference.

We indeed would highly value Your participation in this International Conference on "Preventive Diplomacy and International Cooperation" and therefore it would be very much appreciated if we could get a text of Your Excellency's speech in advance.

All expenses related to Your Excellency's participation in the Conference will be borne by Turkmen Side.

In the end I would like to assure Your Excellency will indeed enjoy respect and warm hospitality in Turkmenistan.

With best regards,

Rashid Meredov

END QUOTE

14. (SBU) COMMENT: In the past, Neutrality Day holiday events tended to be mostly propagandistic show, with "scientific" explanations of how Turkmenistan's policy of "positive neutrality" benefits the region and the world. Given the UN's decision to support establishment of a Regional Center on Preventive Diplomacy here, however, this year's event could have more substance, especially since Turkmenistan is willing to foot the bill for attendees.

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